

**Proceedings of the 2nd Annual  
Federal Depository Library Conference, 1993  
May 19-26, 1993**

---

# Depository Cooperation at the Head of the Lakes: The Twin Ports Government Documents Depository Consortium

James J. Vileta, Government Documents Librarian  
UMD Library, University of Minnesota, Duluth

Networking and cooperation have brought great rewards to the Federal depositories of northeastern Minnesota and northwestern Wisconsin. Working together in the Twin Ports Government Documents Depository Consortium, documents librarians have collectively improved reference and interlibrary loan services by jointly improving bibliographic control and collection development. All that was necessary was good will, a recognition of our shared interests and common needs, and hard work.

The Twin Ports is the name commonly used to refer to the area comprising the adjacent cities of Duluth, Minnesota, and Superior, Wisconsin. Both cities have docks and harbor facilities supporting water transportation on Lake Superior and the other Great Lakes, and thus their nickname. The Twin Ports is known for its economic diversity in such areas as transportation, forestry, mining, agriculture, medicine, fishing, recreation, tourism, wildlife, water quality, small business, commerce and manufacturing. The two cities are seats of county government, and have regional planning offices, relatively large service sectors, a combined total of six institutions of higher learning, and the largest populations in their congressional districts. It was only natural that the depositories allotted to the Eighth Congressional District of Minnesota and the Seventh Congressional District of Wisconsin would be established and maintained in the Twin Ports. Because the two depositories for each of the districts are located in Duluth and Superior, four depository libraries are in close proximity but are responsible for serving relatively large surrounding areas. (see map)

In each city and congressional district, one of the two depository libraries is a public library, and the other is an academic library. The Superior Public Library (SPL) was the first to be established as a depository in 1908, followed by the Duluth Public Library (DPL) in 1909. The Jim Dan Hill Library at the University of Wisconsin Superior (UWS) became a depository in 1935, and in 1984, after 30 years of effort and a fortunate congressional redistricting, the library at the University of Minnesota, Duluth (UMD) became the fourth and final depository for the area. Each public library serves a different primary clientele and each academic library serves a different institution with distinct curricular needs. Depository collections at each library evolved to meet the reference and research needs of each library and the patrons they serve.

The four depositories share complementary strengths among their documents collections. DPL, selecting 29% of available item selections, has the oldest collection, with large runs of Federal documents predating its early depository status. DPL serves the documents needs of its general public, the business community, and governmental agencies. UWS, collecting 35%, also has a very large retrospective collection, much of it paper, reflecting the research and teaching demands of its liberal arts curriculum. SPL, collecting 10%, retains most

items for five to ten years. It maintains the smallest collection, but nevertheless is geared to meet general public interests, including agricultural documents for area farmers. UMD, collecting 39%, has the newest collection, predominantly microfiche, including item selections to support its strong academic and research programs in geology, medicine, engineering, business, and natural resources.

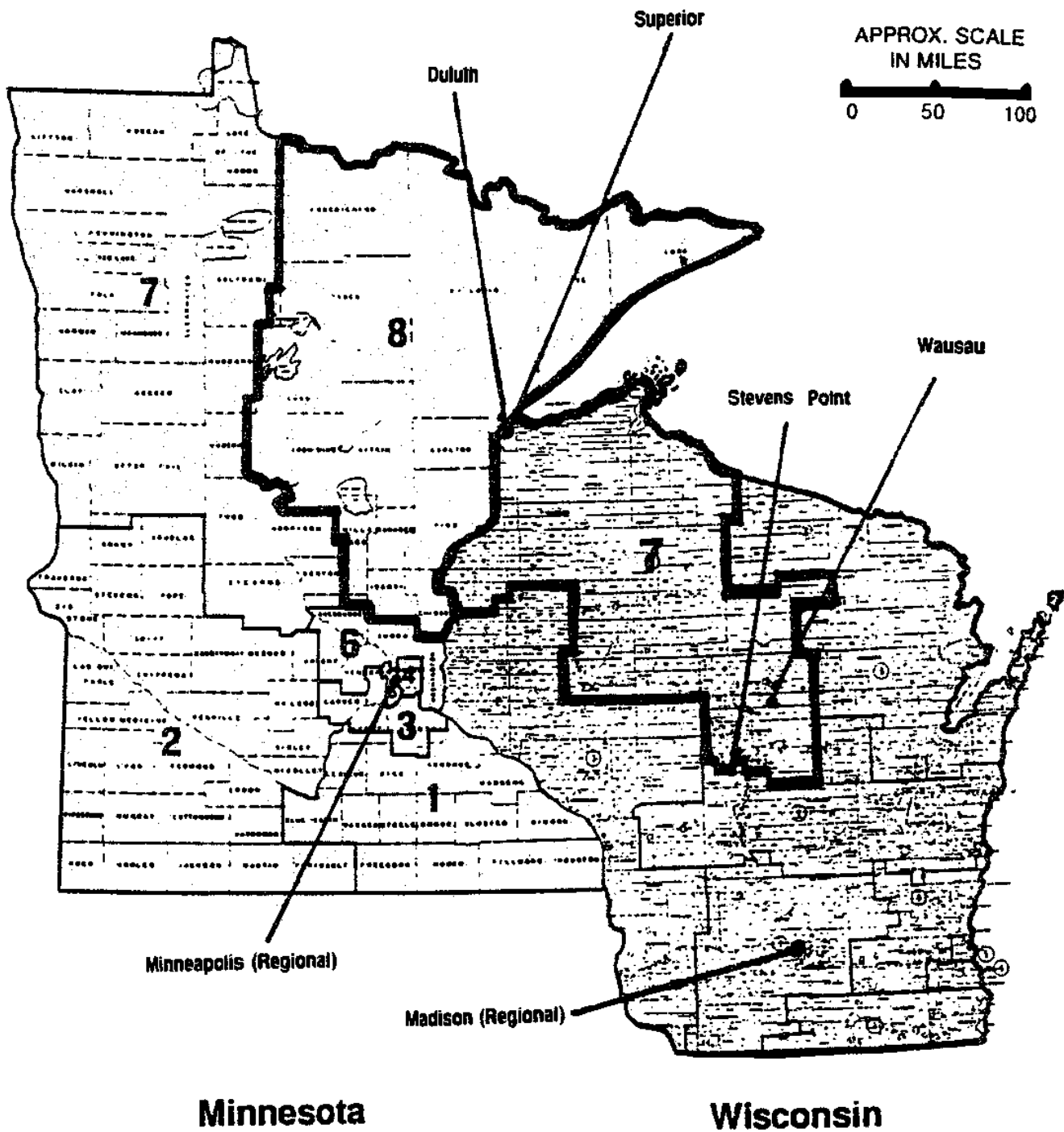
Location of Federal Selective Depositories in the Twin Ports Government Documents Depository Consortium  
Among the depository libraries, there was considerable collection duplication. Some of it was justifiable, but some of it was not. More importantly, for many years, this duplication was not even known to the depositories, since they were not actively interacting with each other. Moreover, each of the original three depositories had significant problems with bibliographic control. In spite of their efforts at shelf listing, they had difficulty knowing generally and specifically what was held in their collections. The general reference departments at each of these libraries were at a loss to provide patrons with quick, dependable information about what was held in their respective libraries. In addition, they had no way of knowing what was held in the other area depositories. This was not an unusual situation. Many depositories across the United States maintaining traditional paper shelf lists relating to large retrospective collections had similar difficulties.

By 1985, just one year after the University of Minnesota, Duluth became a depository, computer technology had advanced to the stage where it was affordable even to a government documents department. As a result, although UMD started with a traditional paper shelf list, it soon moved toward developing its own computerized database to check-in, shelf list, and label documents. With only a few thousand depository documents in its new collection, the UMD depository was able to convert completely to a computerized shelf list. The advantages of a computerized shelf list quickly became apparent to the area librarians who viewed it. They would soon see other ways a computerized database could help them with their collective bibliographic control problems.

In the summer of 1986, Denise Johnson, then documents librarian at the UWS library, suggested that all four depositories meet to get to know each other better. Eager to learn more about the other depository collections in our area, all agreed. Our first meeting took place at the Duluth Public Library. During that productive meeting we began to recognize that we had similar problems and very strong common interests. As a result, we decided to establish a formal organization, or consortium, that would provide mutual support, networking, and cooperation.

After outlining our various problems and needs, it was decided that our first joint project would be the development of an "Area Holdings List" for our depository documents collections. A database that would contain information about each document series held in each library was designed in 1987 at the UMD Library. Remarkable for its time, the database program was one of the first computer programs capable of sorting SuDocs numbers correctly. The database continues to be maintained at the UMD Library and generates a printed holdings list for the consortium-member depositories that contains three sublists: an alphabetical listing by series titles; a numeric listing in Item Number order, and an alpha-numeric listing of SuDocs stems.

# Locations of Selective Federal Government Depositories in the Twin Ports Consortium Region



Location of Federal Selective Depositories in the Twin Ports Government Documents Depository Consortium  
The publication known as the Area Holdings List was first produced in 1989 after a two year investment of hard work by consortium members inputting documents holding information into the database. It provides us with a quick reference source for finding Federal depository publications. With a bibliographic citation in hand from the Monthly Catalog or other such source, a reference librarian can quickly discern by Item Number or SuDocs stem number, whether or not their library or consortium library has a given title. Today the Area Holdings List is now in its third edition, and it has revolutionized our operations in four major ways:

1. We now have convenient, quick and reliable information about current and retrospective (pre-1975) documents holdings in our four depository libraries.
2. We can now make convenient, quick and reliable referrals for patrons. We can tell them with a high degree of certainty which consortium library to contact to find a particular document.
3. We can make interlibrary loans among members of the consortium, and to other libraries with greater ease. Loans that would have often required five or more days to complete can now be filled in one or two days.
4. We now have the information we need to make better collection development decisions. Discerning what is not held in the area that should be, and quickly locating item selections where there is unnecessary duplication, is no longer a problem.

The Area Holdings List has been distributed to other major libraries in the Twin Ports, and these libraries now have an understanding of what is available in the area. As a result, referrals to our collections have increased.

The Area Holdings List has been our crowning achievement to date, but each of the area's depositories has reaped many other benefits by working together in a consortium. Daily communication between the depositories now takes place. We call each other about such things as shipping lists, missing items, interlibrary loans, and for help with difficult reference questions.

At rotating meetings held at each depository we get to know each library facility better. During these meetings, we get a direct visual understanding of each collection's strengths and capabilities. We share tips, discuss ideas, educate, and motivate each other. Often recent state and national documents meetings and seminars are discussed, and we continue to look for ways to advance our common interests. Where possible, we have issued news releases and articles to publicize our existence and services. At consortium meetings the academic libraries have an opportunity to share GOVDOC-L information with the non-Internet public libraries. Together, we are exploring the new CD-ROM technology, and we are sharing expertise to the benefit of the consortium and our patrons.

Our Area Holdings List is still in development. It has proven itself to be a powerful tool and a wise investment. It continues to be an inspiration, forever pointing us toward new and better opportunities to explore and develop. DPL and UWS still have some of their oldest holdings to add to the database. We hope to print a more complete holdings list next year and distribute it to more libraries in our congressional districts. We are looking for ways to improve our visibility and outreach to the relatively vast areas of our congressional districts. We want to survey school as well as academic and public libraries regarding their specific depository needs. We want to hold workshops so other librarians will become more familiar with government documents and be better able to refer patrons to our collections as needed. Perhaps awareness about Federal government publications will inspire more non-depository librarians to purchase additional selected government publications to improve their reference capabilities.

In addition to the Twin Ports Consortium, there are several other networking mechanisms in Minnesota. The Minnesota Library Association's Government Documents Round Table (MLA GODORT) meets periodically to hold informative programs, seminars, and meetings related to documents topics. These are open to all state librarians who work with or who are concerned about local, state and Federal documents. As an information outreach mechanism since 1982, they have been producing an excellent bimonthly newsletter called Doc Soup. The newsletter keeps us informed about upcoming meetings, results of recent meetings, discussions about new technologies, online catalogs, CD-ROMs, and other news affecting the depository system.

In the Twin Cities area of Minneapolis and St. Paul, another networking organization exists called METRODOCS. The group is composed of documents librarians from the Twin Cities and nearby areas, who meet often, know each other well, and provide excellent mutual support.

The Regional Depository Library based in the Wilson Library on the Minneapolis Campus of the University of Minnesota also promotes and provides opportunities for networking. Julia Wallace and her staff have worked closely with the MLA GODORT to hold the Annual Government Publications Information Forums. Over the past six years the forums have brought documents librarians from Minnesota and South Dakota together to take part in meetings and demonstrations that highlight the current issues and relevant concerns of documents librarians. News from national meetings is regularly relayed to librarians who were not able to attend those meetings. These forums are well attended and have been well received by documents librarians.

In the Twin Ports Consortium, we believe that documents work is one of the most dynamic and challenging areas of librarianship. The Federal Depository Library Program has been in a constant state of flux during the 1980s and 1990s. Policies, procedures, offerings, and formats frequently change. New electronic technologies such as CD-ROMs, electronic bulletin boards, and the Internet are providing us with immense opportunities and challenges. Together, each of the depositories in the consortium is stronger, more efficient, more functional than it was alone. By implementing cooperative collection development practices, we have increased the area's total holdings of documents while decreasing unnecessary duplication. We are improving access and availability, while placing fewer demands on the tight budgets of the GPO. This is truly a WIN-WIN situation! Moreover, we are fortunate to have so much support and cooperation from our peers at both the local and state level. We have benefited greatly by the quality of these contacts, and we are grateful for the depository networking organizations active in Minnesota and Wisconsin.